Title: Requests the Central Government to take punitive measures fixing responsibility on the officials failed to clear onion within 24 hours at Mumbai Port.

SHRI N.T. SHANMUGAM *(VELLORE): Hon'ble Chairman, Sir, I would like to recall the incident of causing huge wastage of onion on 15.11.98 at Mumbai Port. In order to overcome the onion shortfall and to challenge the price rise the Government imported a huge consignment of onion from Iran. But the onion that reached Mumbai Port was not cleared in time and got perished. On 21.11.98 the perished onion was thrown away. Thus the irresponsible handling of a pershable commodity which ought to have been cleared from the port within 24 hours caused a heavy loss to the Government. A considerable amount of tax payers' money has gone waste. This disabled the Government to control the onion price thereby affecting countless poor of the country. This had a political fall-out. At least two of the ruling parties had to pay a heavy price losing their Government in the recently concluded elections to certain State Legislative Assemblies. Normally perishable commodities ought to have been cleared within 24 hours if not they ought to have been auctioned and money should have been paid to the exchequer. Hence I urge upon the Government to take suitable punitive measures fixing responsibility on the official who failed to act in time

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*Original in Tamil.